



# United States Olympic Committee

## United States Olympic Committee SafeSport Audit of United States Fencing Association

October 2017

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# Contents

<b>UNITED STATES OLYMPIC COMMITTEE SAFESPORT AUDIT OF UNITED STATES FENCING ASSOCIATION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>4</b>
SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS .....	4
BACKGROUND AND APPROACH .....	4
<b>DETAILED REPORT .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>REPORT APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: PERSONNEL INTERVIEWED .....</b>	<b>11</b>



United States Olympic Committee  
USOC SafeSport Audit of United States Fencing Association

# United States Olympic Committee SafeSport Audit of United States Fencing Association<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To consider the report in its entirety, please refer also to the detailed management response that will appear here [[Governance Documents](#)] within 90 days of the date of this report.



## Executive Summary

### Summary Observations

It shall be the policy of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) that each National Governing Body (NGBs) adopt a Minimum Standards Policy for Athlete Safety Programs (Athlete Safety Standards) by December 31, 2013<sup>2</sup>.

We noted the following opportunities to enhance the design of United States Fencing Association's compliance with the Athlete Safety Standards:

- > **Athlete Safety Standards - Application of the SafeSport Policy (Minors)** – United States Fencing Association's policy states, "All USA Fencing officials for sanctioned events that will have direct access to minor participants shall be screened through the Professional Member program," and "All USA Fencing sanctioned event volunteers that will have direct access to minor participants shall be screened through the Professional Member program." United States Fencing Association's application of this policy is inconsistent with the requirements listed in the Athlete Safety Standards and may be focused too narrowly on minors. The Athlete Safety Standards do not limit these activities to include only minors.
- > **Athlete Safety Standards - Application of the SafeSport Policy** – United States Fencing Association's SafeSport-related documentation and administrative materials does not specifically indicate that the overall policy applies to athletes designated for the USADA registered testing pool.

### Background and Approach

USOC engaged Baker Tilly Virchow Krause (Baker Tilly), to assist the USOC in the completion of SafeSport audits, to assess compliance with SafeSport policies and procedures at the USOC and all of its NGBs and High Performance Management Organizations (HPMOs).

Baker Tilly performed a review of United States Fencing Association to evaluate compliance with the Athlete Safety Standards. The following activities were performed for this review of United States Fencing Association:

- > Developed and executed an audit program that included:
  - Holding a virtual entrance meeting to discuss and document United States Fencing Association's SafeSport program and processes.
  - Selecting a sample of 10 from the required individuals to ensure a background check was performed and education and training was completed. See **Appendix A** for a list of documents reviewed.

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<sup>2</sup> Effective June 20, 2017 the USOC replaced the Athlete Safety Standards with the NGB Athlete Safety Policy. Due to the timing of this audit, fieldwork was performed in accordance with the Athlete Safety Standards.



United States Olympic Committee  
USOC SafeSport Audit of United States Fencing Association

- Reviewing United States Fencing Association's athlete safety policy and determining whether the following was addressed:
    - Required misconduct is prohibited and defined;
    - Reporting procedures are documented; and
    - The grievance process is documented and complies with Athlete Safety Standards.
  - Identifying which individuals are required to undergo a criminal background check and complete education and training.
- > Conducted a virtual exit meeting, if requested, following delivery of the draft report, to discuss audit findings and recommendation(s) with United States Fencing Association. See **Appendix B** for a list of individuals interviewed.
- > Identified specific observations and recommendations regarding opportunities to enhance compliance with Athlete Safety Standards. Observations include the following attributes: criteria, condition, cause, effect and recommendation, as set out in the International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF) Standards and Practice Advisory 2410-1.



# Detailed Report

The tables below represent opportunities to enhance the design and effectiveness of United States Fencing Association's compliance with the Athlete Safety Standards.

<b>1. Athlete Safety Standards - Application of the SafeSport Policy (Minors)</b>	
<b>Criteria</b>	The Athlete Safety Standards state each NGB/HPMO shall require criminal background checks and education and training for those individuals it formally authorizes, approves, or appoints (a) to a position of authority over, or (b) to have frequent contact with athletes.
<b>Condition</b>	United States Fencing Association's policy states, "All USA Fencing officials for sanctioned events that will have direct access to minor participants shall be screened through the Professional Member program," and "All USA Fencing sanctioned event volunteers that will have direct access to minor participants shall be screened through the Professional Member program." United States Fencing Association's application of this policy is inconsistent with the requirements listed in the Athlete Safety Standards and may be focused too narrowly on minors. The Athlete Safety Standards do not limit these activities to include only minors.
<b>Cause</b>	United States Fencing Association may not have updated its SafeSport-related documentation and administrative materials to align with requirements in the Athlete Safety Standards.
<b>Effect</b>	<p>United States Fencing Association may not be in compliance with Athlete Safety Standards. United States Fencing Association must be in compliance with the Athlete Safety Standards to be a member in good standing. Noncompliance with the Athlete Safety Standards can result in disciplinary action by the USOC including withdrawal of high performance funding.</p> <p>Additionally, stakeholders (e.g., coaches, staff, officials, volunteers, etc.) may not know that criminal background checks and education and training requirements apply to them or be informed of SafeSport initiatives and the related misconduct areas. Also, athletes may have contact with individuals who are unaware of SafeSport misconduct and the potential impact to athletes' well-being and/or have contact with individuals who have a criminal history, which could put athletes at SafeSport-related misconduct risk.</p>



**1. Athlete Safety Standards - Application of the SafeSport Policy (Minors)**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>United States Fencing Association must require that individuals it formally authorizes, approves, or appoints (a) to a position of authority over, or (b) to have frequent contact with athletes complete criminal background checks and education and training requirements in a timely manner and before they have contact with athletes to provide assurance that they are educated on the requirements of the Athlete Safety Standards. Compliance with these requirements must be completed within 90 days of receipt of the final audit report.</p>
<b>Management response</b>	<p>We have amended the language of the USA Fencing Safe Sport policy to be in compliance with the Athlete Safety Standards by removing the word “minor” before participants and/or athletes.</p> <p>As a practical matter, USA Fencing has been enforcing the policy for individuals who interact with athletes and participants of all ages.</p>

**2. Athlete Safety Standards - Application of the SafeSport Policy**

<b>Criteria</b>	<p>The Athlete Safety Standards state that the policy shall apply to (1) NGB employees; (2) athletes the NGB designates for the USADA required testing pool (RTP); and (3) individuals the NGB formally authorizes, approves or appoints (a) to a position of authority over, or (b) to have frequent contact with athletes.</p>
<b>Condition</b>	<p>United States Fencing Association's SafeSport-related documentation and administrative materials does not specifically indicate that the overall policy applies to athletes designated for the USADA registered testing pool.</p>
<b>Cause</b>	<p>United States Fencing Association may not have updated its SafeSport-related documentation and administrative materials to align with requirements in the Athlete Safety Standards.</p>
<b>Effect</b>	<p>United States Fencing Association may not be in compliance with the Athlete Safety Standards. United States Fencing Association must be in compliance with the Athlete Safety Standards to be a member in good standing. Noncompliance with the Athlete Safety Standards can result in disciplinary action by the USOC including withdrawal of high performance funding.</p>



<b>2. Athlete Safety Standards - Application of the SafeSport Policy</b>	
	Additionally, certain athletes may not be aware that they must comply with SafeSport-related policies, processes, and procedures.
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>United States Fencing Association must update their SafeSport-related documentation and administrative materials to include the policy applies to athletes the NGB designates for the USADA required testing pool (RTP). Compliance with these requirements must be completed within 90 days of receipt of the final audit report.</p> <p>For example, the following language could be used in place of the current policy language, "The policy shall apply to (1) NGB employees; (2) athletes the NGB designates for the USADA required testing pool (RTP); and (3) individuals the NGB formally authorizes, approves or appoints (a) to a position of authority over, or (b) to have frequent contact with athletes."</p>
<b>Management response</b>	<p>We have amended the language of the USA Fencing Safe Sport policy to be in compliance with the Athlete Safety Standards by specifically including "athletes the NGB designates for the USADA required testing pool (RTP)".</p> <p>As a practical matter, USA Fencing has been enforcing the policy including athletes that we designate for the USADA required testing pool (RTP).</p>





United States Olympic Committee  
USOC SafeSport Audit of United States Fencing Association

## Report Appendices

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## Appendix A: Documents Reviewed

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We reviewed the following documents:

- > Athlete Safety Standards Program Questionnaire
- > Bylaws USA Fencing
- > “How to File a Report” USA Fencing SafeSport Reporting Form
- > Population listing of “required individuals” (i.e., covered individuals required to undergo background check and training)
- > USA Fencing Current Certification List
- > USA Fencing SafeSport Policy (July 17, 2013)



## Appendix B: Personnel Interviewed

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We interviewed the following personnel:

- > Kris Ekeren, Executive Director
- > Suzie Riewald, SafeSport Coordinator